

# San Diego's Common Living Christmas Tree Varieties

Botanical Name

Common Name

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## **Araucaria heterophylla**

Norfolk Island Pine

A conifer, commonly called star pines in San Diego. Popular as house plants since the 1960's. When planted outside they can grow 100' tall with a central leader. The branches grow in widely spaced tiers, with short dark green closely spaced needles on the branches. Improved cutting selections are now grown, but old trees show a lot of seedling variation. Star pines are from Norfolk Island, a small island east of Australia.

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## **Cedrus atlantica 'Glauc'**

Blue Atlas Cedar

A conifer native to Algeria. 'Glauc' the blue form, is the only one readily available for purchase. These tree can get large , up to 60', so proper placement is critical. The needles are thick and heavy, and make the tree very picturesque. Small plants can be used for bonsai's. It's a very adaptable plant, but grows better with regular water.

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## **Cedrus deodara**

Deodar Cedar

Although these large conifers are Himalayan, than have proven to be a very adaptable species, doing well even in the desert. Often found in old neighborhoods in San Diego towering over small bungalows and craftsman style homes. With a potential height of 80', these trees must be carefully placed in the landscape. More compact forms do exist , but are uncommon.

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## **Pinus canariensis**

Canary Island Pine

A tall pine tree from the Canary Islands of the Mediterranean. The trees have a strong apical dominance, and grow with very few side branches. They quickly can reach 60' or more. Long dark green drooping needles are very attractive, but their mature size can be a prohibitive factor. They can take down to 20 degrees, but no lower. While they tolerate drought, they look better with regular water.

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## **Pinus halepensis**

Aleppo Pine

This Afghanistan pine is a common desert pine, although it thrives near the ocean. At maturity it forms a 60' tall tree with a rounded crown. It's large size needs to be a consideration in placement. The needles are light green in twos, but not very fragrant. These trees can have very attractive structures, and lace beautifully.

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## **Pinus halepensis brutia (P. eldarica)**

Mondel Pine

A great desert pine, and more commonly sold in our deserts than at the coast, although it thrives near the ocean. The variety sold is usually a blue form of this Afghanistan pine. At maturity it forms a 50' to 80' tall tree with a rounded crown. It's large size needs to be a consideration in placement.

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## **Pinus pinea**

Italian Stone Pine

These pine can be seen as the flat topped skyline trees in Italy. Pine nuts come from these trees. The thick trunks are very showy, but at a potential 50' or more, may be too big for the average residential garden. These trees are usually sold as a 2 gal tree while the juvenile foliage is blue, as the trees mature, the foliage is a dark gray-green.

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## **Pinus radiata**

Monterey Pine

The most popular living Christmas tree, and the worst for our San Diego climate. They have very fragrant dark green needles, and grow very fast. Unfortunately, they are also shallow rooted, as the reach there potential 80' they are prone to blowing over. They like the cool coastal conditions of the Monterey Coast and when out of this moisture rich area, they are highly susceptible to disease and insect damage.

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## **Pinus roxburgii**

Chir Pine

Long dark green needles, with an artistic branch structure. Similar to P. canariensis, but with a more interesting branch structure. The tree is Himalayan with a typical height of 40', but can get larger. Great near the coast, but also tolerates inland valleys if watered. Uncommon in nurseries, but well worth looking for, can make a beautiful specimen where it has enough room to mature.

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## **Pinus thunbergii**

Black Pine

A smaller pine in southern California, usually under 30', but can get to 100' in it's native Japan. The branches are irregularly arranged and covered in dark green needles that are long and stiff. This species takes well to pruning, it can trained a Christmas tree, or into a beautiful naturalistic style, similar to a large bonsai. Dwarf varieties exist and can be found in specialty nurseries. Tolerates abuse better than most pine, especially if kept in a

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## **Pinus torreyana**

Torrey Pine

Our very own native pine, from a very small area of the San Diego coast and coastal islands. Surprisingly adaptable it's now widely distributed worldwide. Too large for most residential properties with a mature height of 60'. Long gray-green needles are quite beautiful on this relatively open structured tree. Doesn't tolerate heading back cuts well, best if thinned if pruning is needed. Very drought tolerant.

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## **Sequoia sempervirens**

Coast Redwood

Water loving trees from the coastal ranges of northern California and north. Among the worlds tallest trees with a possible 350', but usually only 80' in one human lifetime. Need lots of water in Southern California, best if planted with copious amounts of organic matter. Best if near the coast, resents Santa Anna winds and can burn badly if not protected. Many selected forms are available. Most with soft green or blueish foliage.

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## **Sequoiadendron giganteum**

Giant Redwood

One of the tallest trees in the world as well the most massive, well over 100' tall with a huge trunk. A squat tree with stiff spiny gray blue foliage. It grows relatively slowly in Southern California, with a very wide lower branch structure, not always the easiest to fit into the residential landscape. Can grow in a much colder climate than its native coastal California, although it needs less water than it's relative the coastal redwood,